1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

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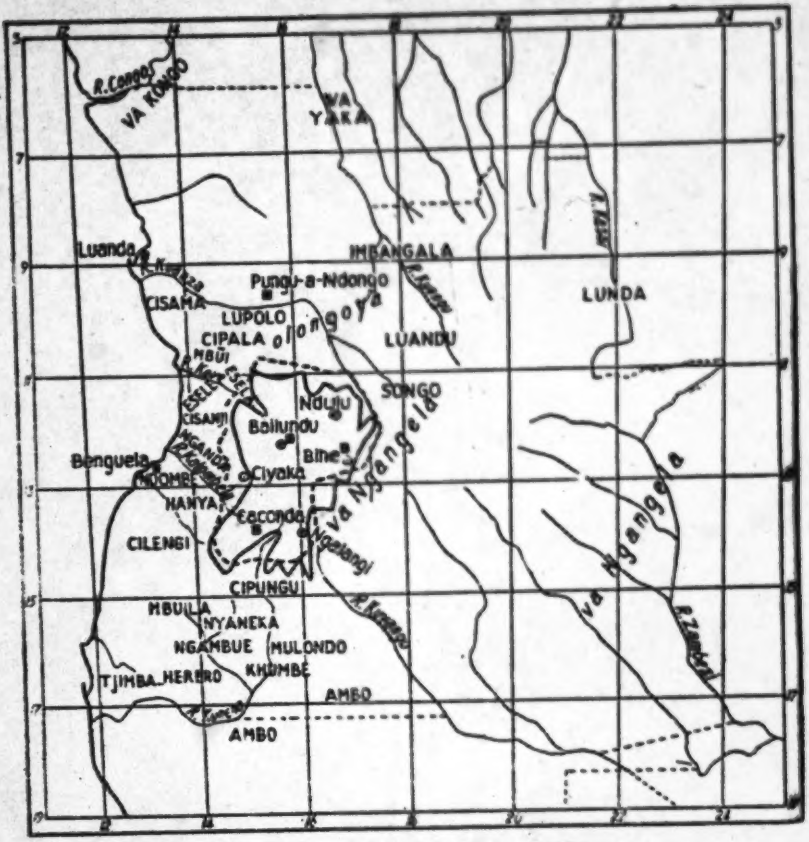

HABITAT OF THE OVIMBUNDU

AND THEIR POSITION WITH REGARD TO THEIR NEIGHBOURS

Heavy continuous line indicates elevation of 1,500 metres (4,920 ft.).

Broken line indicates limits of Umbundu territory.

© Leading capital villages (*olombala*). ■ Portuguese presidios.

[facing p. 1]

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

HABITAT

[p. 1]

Morphology

131 133 THE homeland of the Ovimbundu is the Benguela Highland in central Angola. Strictly speaking the Highland comprises those regions which have an elevation of 1,500 metres (about 4,920 feet) or more. A glance at the accompanying map will show how closely the territory inhabited by the Ovimbundu corresponds with the extent of the Highland proper. The adjoining regions, in which the Ovimbundu also live, nowhere have an elevation inferior to 1,000 metres (about 3,280 feet). Geographically the region of the Highland is a part of the South African sub-continental plateau. The ridges of the Highland form the plateau's highest north-western portion.

133 Geologically this sub-continental plateau is one of the oldest parts of the earth's surface. The north-western portion, with which this study is concerned, has remained above sea-level from before the time of fossils. The vast slab of primeval crystalline rock which forms the foundation of the plateau often outcrops in the form of isolated rocks of unusual appearance,[1] or in massive peaks, the highest of which, in the western escarpment, reach an elevation of nearly 9,000 feet (2,850 metres).[2] Some of these outcrops remain bare, some are hidden by laterite and some by soil formed from decomposition of rock.

Among the sediments which overlie these primeval rocks there are unfossiliferous sandstones, conglomerates, and others, all of [316] which are considered to be of Palaeozoic age. Deposits of iron are numerous, many of which were once worked by the Ovimbundu 000 or by their predecessors. Much of the soil has been greatly im-

[1] Several of these rocks have caught the attention of travellers and writers. *Luvili* (north-west of Bailundu) is perhaps the most striking of all. Cameron said that the natives called it 'The Devil's Finger', a name I have not been able to verify. *Nganda* and *Kawe* are near the railway between Nova Lisboa and Vila Robert Williams. A journalist recently gave them the name of 'Cleopatra's Breasts'.

[2] One of the peaks of the ridge called *Moko* (The Knife) is the highest, but no complete survey has been made.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

The Village

Among the Ovimbundu the outstanding social and political unit at the present time is the village (*imbo*, plural *ovaimbo*). The village may consist of from 5 to 500 households,[1] the heads of which are in the great majority of cases related to each other in the male line. Each village has a headman or elder (*sekulu*, literally 'grandfather' or 'elder father') who is literally, according to Umbundu kinship usage, the patriarch of the villagers. He was formerly responsible for his village to the sub-chief, and through him to the king. At the present time, the administrative authorities hold the village headmen responsible for matters relating to taxes, labour recruiting, &c. The present decay of this office and of village life varies very greatly from region to region. Nearly everywhere matters of purely local concern are not directly interfered with, and the headman continues his patriarchal government, assisted by a council of all (male) householders.

Ngendo, a typical village. The village of Ngendo lies at about 14° 40′ east, 11° 40′ south, about thirty-five miles south-west of the Keve, where that river crosses the fifteenth parallel, and about sixty miles in a direct line from the Atlantic Ocean. Its altitude is about 1,650 metres, and the ground on which it is built slopes down to a small stream of the Keve system. Directly across the stream to the north rises the granite outcrop on which may be seen the ruined fortress of Usengo. Ngendo belongs to the tribe of Kasongi, *etumbu* of Ekongo. It is about fifteen miles north-west of the administrative post of Cassongue and about two miles from the motor road which connects that post and points farther inland with the district capital and port of Novo Redondo.

The most striking feature of this village is the fact that it consists of four smaller units or wards (*ovitawila*, plural), each of which appears to be quite self-contained. The four together make up the village (*imbo*), which name is also applied to either of the two larger units by themselves. Each unit has its own elder, but

[1] Most, but not all, of the larger villages are *olombala* (q.v., *supra*), but even these are not as large now as they formerly were. In 1850 the *ombala* of Bailundu was said to have 5,000 inhabitants (Magyar, op. cit.). At the present time there is probably no village with more than 3,000 inhabitants, and few of that size. The tendency seems to be toward smaller villages, and there is even some movement toward isolated households and farmsteads after the fashion of so many of the Southern Bantu.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

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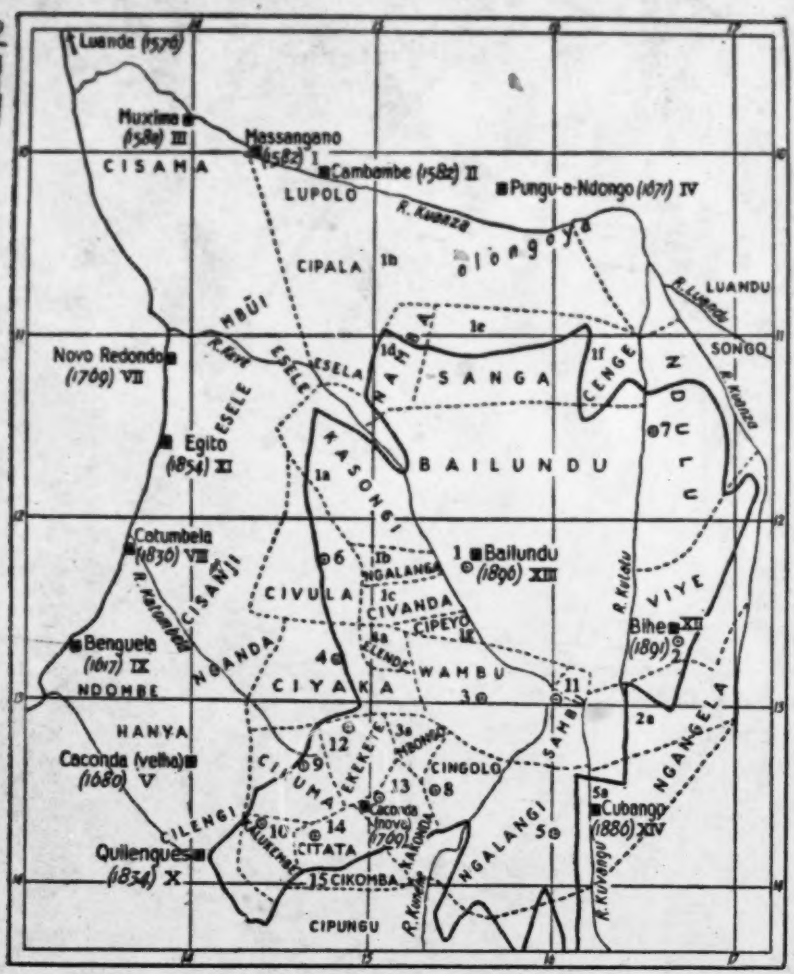

TRIBAL DIVISIONS AND HISTORY OF THE OVIMBUNDU

Heavy continuous line indicates elevation of 1,500 metres (4,920 ft.).

Broken lines indicate Umbundu political boundaries.

⊙ Principal capital towns (*olombala*) numbered 1 to 14.

1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, 1e, 1f, 1g, 1h, tributaries of Bailundu; 2a, tributaries (Ngangela) of Viye; 5a, tributaries of Ngalangi; 3a, tributary of Civaka; 4a, tributary of Wambu.

Portuguese presídios with dates of founding (numbered I—XIV).

[Facing p. 167]

a	b
c	f
e	d

Chart of positions of sections of End Map.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

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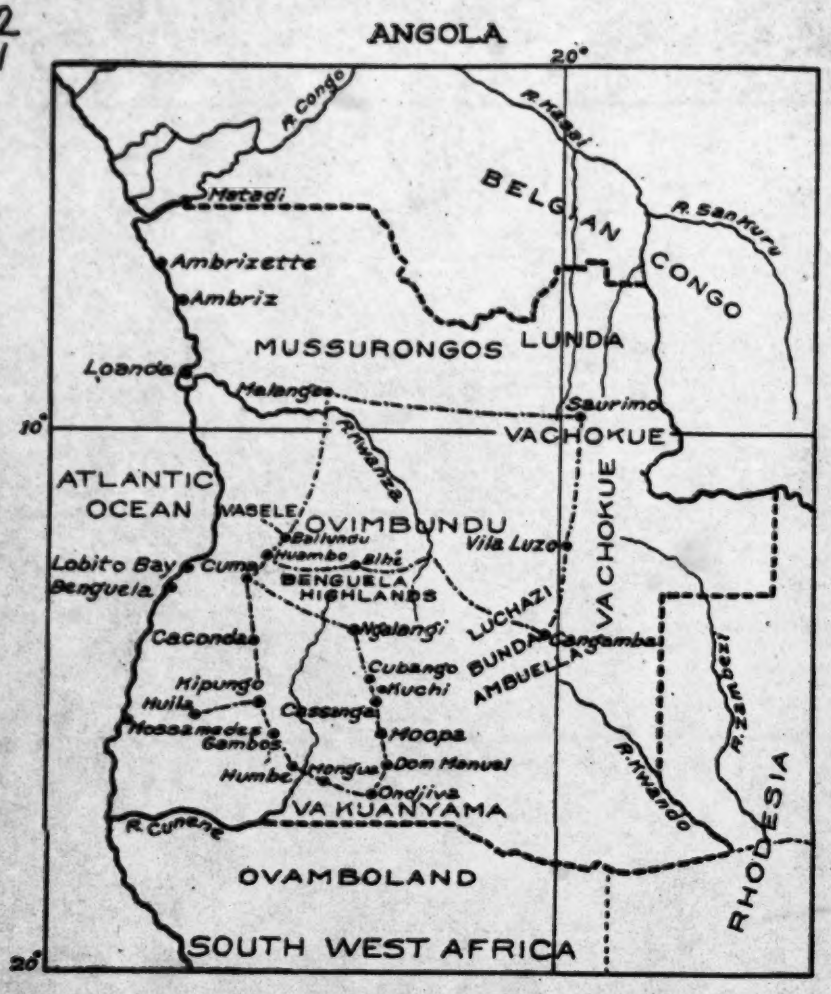

MAP SHOWING ROUTE OF EXPEDITION
Scale: 1 inch = 220 miles; —— Indicates route

[Facing p. 87]

II. GEOGRAPHICAL FACTORS

121 This chapter is intended to give an outline of the geographical conditions of Angola and to point out the way in which these have influenced the growth of Umbundu culture in all its aspects.

A presentation of geographical data is of primary importance here, and the actual relationship between the facts of geography and culture is a matter for gradual evaluation in the following chapters. The extent to which geographic determinism has entered into the cultural growth of the Ovimbundu is particularly well seen in chapter V, "Economic Life," which deals with industries, agriculture, domestic animals, fishing, and transport.

The area of Angola is a factor of importance, for the greater the extent of any country the more diversified will be the products and the cultural differences. This is particularly true if there are considerable differences in the elevation, because altitude modifies temperature and affects the distribution of rainfall.

131 Angola has an area of almost 500,000 square miles. The greatest length is a distance of about 900 miles from the river Congo in the north to the region of South West Africa. The greatest breadth is about 700 miles from the Atlantic Ocean on the west to the borders of the Rhodesian plateau in the east. This range over twelve degrees of latitude, from 5° S. to 17° S., in association with differences in altitude, have produced ecological regions which are described in the following paragraphs.

132 311 167 The northern part of Angola is ecologically a part of the Congo basin, with conditions of heat and moisture giving rise to a dense tropical flora. Owing to the presence of tsetse fly, the great heat, and the lack of open grasslands, such country is unsuited for the rearing of cattle, while agriculture, including cultivation of maize, is restricted to forest clearings. Manioc, palm trees, peanuts, and sweet potatoes are the chief products serviceable to man. This region was, according to the historical evidence of chapter III, the area in which the Ovimbundu moved before they entered the Benguela Highlands of central Angola. Parts of chapters III and X ("Historical Sources" and "Culture Contacts," respectively) are devoted to an analysis of the cultural factors of the Congo area from the year A.D. 1500 to the present day.

131 The central portion of Angola is the area most important in this research because it is the home of the Ovimbundu, whose cultural

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

growth is under examination. This central plateau, the Benguela Highlands, rises in places to a height of 6,000 feet, an altitude which reduces the heat of the tropics and so modifies the flora, discouraging some types of vegetation and encouraging others. Hostility of the highlands to palm trees and the banana is appropriately discussed when dealing with cultural losses; while the fostering effect of reduced temperature and the presence of wide expanses of open country on the growth of maize and the keeping of cattle is a cultural gain.

The prevailing rains of Angola are from the northeast to the southwest; consequently the high plateau intercepts rain clouds which give an annual fall of sixty inches. This adequate rainfall is another factor which has affected economic life, density of population, communal welfare, and powers of expansion.

The villages of the Ovimbundu are built on hillsides having a commanding view of the surrounding country. There is in the nature of the land a natural protection from enemies. In addition to this the Benguela Highlands are an admirable base from which expeditions both predatory and commercial might, and actually did set out eastward to the interior of Africa, and southwest to the cattle-keeping country.

It is important to note that this central plateau is the watershed for four large river systems; the Kwanza to the northwest; the Cunene to the southwest; the tributaries of the Kasai to the northeast; and the Zambezi and its affluents to the southeast. Fishing, with attendant beliefs of a ritualistic kind, is of local importance; so also is the making of canoes. Moreover, the river valleys have marked out a natural means of communication in several directions.

In connection with the river system the biological factor of the tsetse fly is important, because the presence of the fly locally discourages human habitation and prevents the keeping of cattle. The exact distribution of the fly is imperfectly known, but *Glossinia palpalis*, the cause of sleeping sickness in human beings, also *Glossinia morsitans*, which carries disease to cattle, are both present along the Kwanza and parts of the other rivers (J. C. B. Statham, Through Angola, p. 294).

The western coastal strip is a region of great aridity which has in some years no rainfall whatever, because the northeasterly rains have expended themselves on the high plateau. This region displays vegetation of the semi-desert type; namely, baobab trees, prickly acacias, euphorbias, and aloes. Population in this area is sparse, always nomadic, and in some places non-existent. The coastal strip

The coastal strip

131 was at times traversed by the Ovimbundu who know of the sea and
484 call it *kalunga*. Bihéan caravans crossed to the coast with slaves, as history shows, but the nature of the coastal strip marks it as a western barrier limiting the expansion of the Ovimbundu in that direction. The coast line itself is of the greatest moment in the consideration of historical factors. From Loanda, Benguela, and
[177] Mossamedes on the coast, the Portuguese penetrated the interior, so making contacts with the Ovimbundu to the encouragement of caravan trade. The importance of this European contact will be seen in subsequent chapters.

The south and southwest parts of Angola are of particular importance in studying the contacts of the Ovimbundu, but to give here the details of the wealthy cattle-keeping culture of these regions, which were accessible through peaceful proximity, trade, and occasional raiding, would be an anticipation of chapter X, "Culture Contacts."
[723] One topographical point is of primary importance; namely, the ease with which the Ovimbundu could descend from their strongholds to the low-lying land of the west and south, whereas the reverse journey is much more difficult for a people unaccustomed to manoeuvring and finding their way among hills.

101 Having described the northern, central, western, and southern areas, there remains only the eastern section to consider; this presents several features of peculiar geographical and ethnological interest.
[133] The eastern section of Angola is either slightly undulating or flat, the general characteristic is dryness, and vegetation is somewhat
[136] sparse though sufficient to shelter many kinds of antelope.

The major population is the Vachokue, a warlike, hunting people, who follow agricultural pursuits but slightly, and do not keep cattle. Examination of the literature describing early exploration indicates
[726] the truculent nature of these eastern people with whom caravans of Ovimbundu were in frequent conflict. Umbundu caravans crossed this country when making their way to Rhodesia, culture contacts with which are discussed in chapter X.

The results of contact of Ovimbundu and Vachokue tribes, so far as physical miscegenation is concerned, are mentioned in chapter "Physical Appearance"; while the social effects of slavery resulting from hostilities are described in chapter VI, "Social Life."

174 Rhodesia is a cattle-raising country, but the hostility of the
231 Vachokue, the great distance from central Angola to Rhodesia, and the general dryness of the country to be crossed, discourage the idea that the Ovimbundu obtained their cattle from Rhodesia. If it is

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

174 there is tribal and cultural miscegenation. Both Umbundu and
171 Vachokue languages are spoken; boys of Ngalangi were seen to wear
[281] initiation costumes similar to those worn at Cangamba by the Vachokue, but on proceeding farther westward into territory exclusively occupied by the Ovimbundu, such initiation ceremonies are either absent or attenuated in ritual.

144 Elende, one center of research among the Ovimbundu, repre-
101 sents the purest Umbundu speech and culture observable at the present day. But in chapter IV some physical resemblance of the Ovimbundu to the Vachokue is noted. Warfare commonly resulted in the taking of slaves, a fact which might account for an apparent infusion of Vachokue blood in some of the Ovimbundu.

174 The historical data suggest a northern or northeastern starting
167 point of Umbundu migrations. Therefore an inquiry into the ethnology of these areas will be useful in showing the kind of culture with which the Ovimbundu were in contact before their settlement in the Benguela Highlands. If historical sources disclose the nature of northern Angolan culture from the year A.D. 1500 onward, such evidence can then be considered in relation to cultural traits of the Ovimbundu at the present day.

The establishment of strong cultural resemblances between extant Umbundu culture and older cultural patterns of northern Angola, would tend to strengthen the evidence of history respecting the northern origin of the Ovimbundu.

131 The regions dealt with in the following summary of ethnological
174 facts are the Cabinda Enclave to the north of the Congo estuary, the region of San Salvador, the hinterlands of Loanda and Benguela, and the area of northern Angola between Lat. 7° and 9° S. and Long. 13° to 22° E. This covers the whole area with which the Ovimbundu are likely to have been in contact before entering their present home.

175 My survey begins with the observations of Andrew Battell in
101 1596. His account deals mainly with the northwestern part of Angola, a country bordering on and actually including territory now occupied by the Ovimbundu, who in all probability came in contact with the Jaggas, whose habits of life are described by Battell.

Torday and Joyce identify the Jaggas with the present-day Bayaka, whose cultural resemblances to the Ovimbundu are examined later. In my opinion, the Jaggas correspond well with the Bihéan section of the Ovimbundu, an itinerant and exceedingly warlike people.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
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CHAPTER I

THE OLD SOCIETY

1. *History*

The Ovimbundu, who live on the Benguela Highland[1] of central Angola, have been in contact with Europeans since their emergence as a people in the sixteenth–seventeenth centuries. Dr. Childs has provided an excellent account of their history,[2] based on the collection of traditional narratives and a study of the published sources in English, German, and Portuguese.

The Ovimbundu arose from a fusion of two stocks, one that of the 'Jagas', a conquering race who invaded the Benguela Highland in the sixteenth–seventeenth centuries, and the indigenous occupants of the area who were culturally and linguistically related to the peoples who now live in south-west Angola.[3] The Jagas were described in some detail by the English sailor Andrew Battell[4] who was their prisoner for some time at the beginning of the seventeenth century. He tells us that they were warlike cannibals who recruited their numbers by taking adolescents from the peoples they conquered.[5] This society did not reproduce itself normally by descent since all children born were put to death.[6] He locates them geographically in the Amboim–Cela–Quibala area[7] to the north of the present Umbundu territory. Cavazzi writing in the later seventeenth

[1] In Portuguese, Planalto de Benguela.
[2] Childs, pp. 164–215.
[3] Ibid. p. 190.
[4] Ravenstein (Ed.). *The Strange Adventures of Andrew Battell.* Hakluyt Society, London 1901.
[5] Ravenstein, p. 33.
[6] Ibid. p. 32.
[7] Ibid. pp. 84, 85; Childs, p. 86.

[p. xviii is blank - Analyst]

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

Adapted from the map facing page 167 in Childs' *Umbundu Kinship and Character.*

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

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